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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000155

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#) [ELECTIONS](#)  
SUBJECT: PDP LEADERS COMMIT TO APRIL POLLS

REF: A. ABUJA 61  
[1](#)B. 06 ABUJA 3227

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Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Heather Merritt for reasons 1  
.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Visiting AF/W Deputy Director Donald Heflin and Poloffs paid a courtesy call on People's Democratic Party (PDP) National Chairman Dr. Amadu Ali, National Secretary Chief Ojo Maduekwe, and other party leaders January 23. The PDP leaders talked about the new party manifesto which was approved at a recent policy retreat attended by all PDP candidates. Dr. Ali also discussed changes to the party's constitution that were passed at the convention in December, the most important of which makes President Obasanjo head of an invigorated PDP Board of Trustees upon his retirement from office in May. Maduekwe and Ali firmly committed the party to an April 2007 election and predicted that Governor Yar'Adua will win the presidency with approximately the same percentage of the vote that President Obasanjo obtained in [1](#)2003. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Dr. Amadu Ali explained the size and scope of the PDP, saying that the party was present in all 8812 wards of Nigeria's 774 local government areas in all 36 states and the FCT, with additional chapters overseas representing the diaspora. Not only does the PDP control the executive and legislative branches of the federal government, 28 governors belong to the PDP and their state assemblies are also PDP-dominated. Despite the PDP's dominance in Nigerian government, the party leadership became concerned about a perceived lack of unity amongst PDP officeholders. The party wants to ensure that a common thread of policy will unite a PDP government in one state to another. To this end, the party developed a new policy platform and held a 3-day retreat in Abuja which was attended by President Obasanjo and by all party-flagbearers from Governor Yar'Adua down to candidates for state houses of assembly (Ref. A). The party also instituted a new code of conduct and required that all PDP candidates sign a "leadership bond", a contract with the party that they will obey the code of conduct.

[1](#)3. (C) Dr. Ali also noted that the PDP revised its constitution at the December 2006 party convention (Ref. B). The changes are designed to give the party's Board of Trustees a more active role in the management of the party hierarchy and a PDP government. The constitution now stipulates that the Chairman of the Board of Trustees must be

a former president elected on the PDP platform -- a condition which, at present, only President Obasanjo can fulfill. Ali explained that in his new capacity as Chairman of the Board, Obasanjo will continue to serve as an unofficial advisor to the new government on matters such as foreign diplomacy. (Note: This assumes that the new government comes from the PDP.) The Board of Trustees will also work to ensure that the PDP's platform is followed by its candidates and officeholders.

¶4. (U) Chief Maduekwe said that the PDP leadership instituted the new platform and constitutional changes because of a "grand vision to deepen democracy in Nigeria." He claimed that the PDP wants to be more than just a party to form government, but a group that can ensure that democracy can never suffer a reverse and can help "make Nigeria an African and a global success story." He touted the party's commitment to "20 by 2020," for Nigeria to become one of the world's 20 largest economies by the year 2020.

¶5. (C) The PDP leadership was confident that the Yar'Adua presidential campaign is off to a good start. The PDP campaign headquarters opened recently in the Maitama district of Abuja, and the Yar'Adua campaign will kick off January 27 in Lagos. Both Ali and Maduekwe stressed that the PDP wants this to be an issues-based election and stressed that the PDP manifesto will be at the forefront of Yar'Adua's campaign. Dr. Ali admitted that voter registration got off to a rocky start, as voters' initial enthusiasm for the registration exercise was dampened by the severe shortage of machines. However, he said that at last count 43 million voters have been registered and when asked whether there was any chance that the elections could be postponed, he replied that the PDP was completely committed to April 2007 elections. Ali and Maduekwe were unequivocal that April elections will happen on time and predicted that Yar'Adua will win the

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presidency with a similar percentage of votes to what President Obasanjo received in 2003, approximately 62%.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: It will be interesting to see whether the party's new policy manifesto has any impact on the presidential race, or whether the "politics as usual" of money, ethnic/religious identity, and personality will continue. The discussion of President Obasanjo's new role as the Board of Trustees chairman was also noteworthy, as it may fuel fears that Obasanjo will impose a weak, controllable successor and continue to wield power himself behind the scenes. It was striking, however, that the PDP leadership was willing to firmly commit themselves to April elections, given persistent rumors that the government is scheming to delay the polls. END COMMENT.  
CAMPBELL